



**UN**

**Volunteers**

## **In FACT: UN Volunteers and electoral assistance**

Working with the United Nations agencies system and national electoral authorities, the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme supports the democratic process in countries around the world by assisting the organization, supervision and observance of local, regional and national elections. Key partners include the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the Electoral Assistance Division of the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO).

Since 1992, more than 5,000 UN Volunteers have assisted in 45 UN or other international body supported electoral processes in activities such as civic education, technical preparation, and monitoring and observing. A more recent feature of UNV's work in this area includes strengthening the skills and capacities of national personnel, and thereby helping establish a local base for future elections.

These UN Volunteers are part of the 8,000-strong contingent of qualified and experienced women and men who serve each year with the UNV programme. Representing more than 160 nationalities, the UN Volunteers – 75 per cent of whom are from developing countries – support peace, relief and development initiatives in some 140 developing countries and economies in transition. With an average age of 39 and 10 years of work experience, they bring to peacekeeping a cadre of professional, seasoned and highly motivated citizens who want to be active in the work of the UN.

### **Examples of UNV's current and past engagements in electoral assistance include:**

- In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UN Volunteers assigned to the UN Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and UNDP are involved in the preparations of what is internationally regarded as one of the most challenging elections ever handled by the United Nations. UN Volunteers throughout the country are readying for the upcoming national vote on July 30 by gathering logistic information, educating the population through civic education activities, and assisting the national electoral commission in the set-up of electoral offices countrywide; all in a country the size of Western Europe. Stationed in remote villages, some 150 UN Volunteers are charged with reaching out to isolated groups to encourage their participation and inclusion in the vote. To motivate women, they work with local female leadership to equip them with information and tools to spread the voting message.
- In Haiti, UN Volunteers with the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) were instrumental in readying the country for presidential and parliamentary elections on February 7, 2006. Working closely with the Organization of American States, the country's Provisional Electoral Commission and the mission's electoral assistance unit, UN Volunteers supported the overall organization of the election's logistics, such as identifying and equipping voting centres, helping distribute national identification cards and providing training to national elections staff. They established and managed election registration bureaus—fixed locations and mobile—to register an estimated 3.5 million Haitians. UN Volunteers also supported awareness raising activities to educate the population on the electoral process. And to boost inclusion and participation in the elections, UN Volunteers held presentations at schools and other public areas to introduce and discuss the elections in an open and non-threatening environment.
- The desire for peace in Liberia received a strong vote of confidence on October 11, 2005, when Liberians turned out to cast ballots in the country's first post-war elections. This resulted in Africa's

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UN Volunteers is administered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)



first elected female head of state. UN Volunteer electoral officers part of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) were engaged in all aspects of the electoral process. In close collaboration with the Electoral Department of UNMIL and the Liberian National Elections Commission (NEC), teams of UN Volunteers played a vital role in registering some 1.3 million voters in Liberia's main towns, remote villages and camps for the internally displaced, where they also carried out civic education campaigns, identified registration and polling stations, and advised on legal matters. UN Volunteers also trained some 18,500 election officials including presiding officers and polling staff in all eighteen provincial UN electoral offices.

- UN Volunteers attached to the UN Operations in Burundi (ONUB) provided technical and logistic assistance to the National Independent Electoral Commission in organizing the country's first post-transitional elections in August 2005. Thirty-five UN Volunteer Provincial Electoral Advisors assigned to the mission's Electoral Unit since July 2004 were deployed on several occasions to ONUB regional offices to set-up electoral logistics and voting structures. UN Volunteers also organized voter registration campaigns and conducted training for national electoral officers.

*UNV is the UN organization that supports the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals through the promotion of volunteerism, including the mobilization of volunteers. To this end, UNV provides the opportunity each year for more than 7,000 women and men - 75 per cent coming from developing countries - to support peace, relief and development initiatives in some 140 countries. In addition, it engages thousands of other individuals in the work of the United Nations through [www.onlinevolunteering.org](http://www.onlinevolunteering.org), and manages the [WorldVolunteerWeb.org](http://WorldVolunteerWeb.org), a portal that serves as a knowledge resource base on volunteerism worldwide.*

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